

HARVEY.



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by W. Munk

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Richard L. L.,

1883.

J. Martin
with the writer's kind regards

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES
LEADING TO AND ATTENDING THE
REINTOMBMENT OF THE REMAINS
OF
DR. WILLIAM HARVEY
The Discoverer of the Circulation of the Blood
IN THE
CHURCH OF HEMPSTEAD IN ESSEX
On the 18th of October, 1883

LONDON
PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
1883





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Reintombment of William Harvey.



ON St. Luke's Day, October 18th, 1883, a ceremony of more than ordinary interest took place in the ruinous church of Hempstead, in the county of Essex. On that day the remains of Dr. William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, were removed from the vault under Hempstead Church, in which they have rested, with others of Harvey's kin, for two centuries and a quarter, and were deposited in a marble sarcophagus, which had been provided by the Royal College of Physicians, and placed within the church itself, and in the centre of the Harvey Chapel there.

Harvey died on the 3rd of June, 1657. On that day the heart of the author of the celebrated treatise *De Motu Cordis* ceased to beat, the blood of the immortal discoverer of the circulation to move :—"Gulielmi Harvæi fortunatissimi Anatomici desiit *Sanguis Moveri* tertio Idus Junii '57," wrote his contemporary and friend Dr. Baldwin Hamely.*

An interval of more than three weeks elapsed between the death of Harvey and his burial. On the 25th of June, 1657, such of the Fellows of the College of Physicians as wished to follow the body of its greatest ornament and benefactor, the next day on its way to the place of his interment at Hempstead, in Essex, were instructed by the College to do so, habited in the gowns of their respective offices or of their university degree.† And on the morning of the following day, June 26, the body of Harvey was attended by the President, Dr. Alston, and a large number of the Fellows of the College far beyond the city walls. Aubrey, who accompanied the body to its destination, and was one of those who bore Harvey's coffin into the vault, tells us "he was buried in a vault at Hempstead in Essex, which his brother Eliab had built; he was lapt in lead and on his breast in great letters his name, Dr. William Harvey."

There, for a period of more than two hundred years the body of Harvey

* "*Bustorum Aliquot Reliquia*," a MS. in the library of the College of Physicians.

† "*Comitia solennia trimestria 25^o Junii 1657. Monentur socii, ut togati prosequi veiant exequias funeris Dⁿⁱ Harvæi postero die celebrandas.*"

remained, if not forgotten, presumably unnoticed and uncared for, alike it would seem by the College of Physicians and by his own family. About the end of that period rumours began to reach the College of the defective and battered, and, it must be admitted, discreditable state into which the leaden coffin and the remains of its benefactor had been allowed to fall. At the extraordinary comitia of May 13, 1859, the College deputed two of its fellows, Dr. Quain and Dr. Alexander P. Stewart, to visit Hempstead Church, make all necessary inquiries into the subject, and report thereon to the College.

Dr. Quain and Dr. Stewart visited Hempstead on the 9th of June, 1859, and from their report, which was read to the College on the 14th of July following, we gather that the vault which contained the remains of Harvey is a large apartment, the ceiling of which rises a few feet above the floor of the church. In this chamber they found forty-six coffins placed on the floor more or less irregularly. Light and air were freely and abundantly admitted to the vault by three open grated windows. The leaden coffin which contains Harvey's remains was in the more distant part of the vault, in the centre of a row of twelve other coffins, all similar in form and structure. The coffin of Harvey, easily recognized by his name, which appears in raised letters in the usual situation, was placed immediately beneath one of the open windows. The coffins in this row are all peculiar in shape. They resemble Egyptian mummy cases, even to the extent of presenting a mask of the features. Several of these cases or coffins have collapsed in part, leaving a concave or well-like cavity on the upper surface. This is the case in a marked degree with the coffin of Harvey. The result has been that the rain, beating through the open window exposed to the east, had accumulated in the hollow on the upper surface and passed thence into the coffin through a fissure situated towards the feet. At the time of the visit certainly the lower third, and most probably the whole coffin, was filled with dirty water. The attendant told Drs. Quain and Stewart that, to the best of her belief, the coffin had been in that state for many years.

"With a view to remedying this state of things, which," say the reporters, "should no longer be suffered to exist, we recommend that means be taken to remove the water; that the coffin be repaired; and that, being removed to a less exposed situation in the vault, it be enclosed in an open stone case."

The President of the College, Dr. Mayo, in compliance with a vote of the fellows, having communicated the substance of this report to the representatives of the Harvey family, requested that the College of Physicians might be permitted to undertake the duty of adopting the measures therein recommended for the better preservation of the remains of their great benefactor. But such permission was withheld, and after considerable delay Dr. Mayo was informed that the "necessary repairs" had been carried out by the family.

These repairs proved, however, in the sequel, to be inadequate; and on the 23rd of February, 1882, Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson—who within the last five-and-thirty years has made frequent visits to Harvey's resting-place, and to whom, more than to any other individual, is due the attention which has been given to

Harvey's remains and the efforts which the College of Physicians has now made to preserve them—informed the College that the great tower of Hempstead Church had fallen to the ground;* that the coffin of Harvey, fortunately, had not been injured by the fall; but that it had become, from time and natural causes, so decayed that the rain had again ready access to its interior.† A committee of five Fellows was at once appointed to visit Hempstead and advise the College what steps should be taken for the more efficient preservation of Harvey's remains.

In the report which was received and adopted by the College on the 23rd of May, 1882, it is stated that many suggestions had been made on the subject to the committee, but that only one of these appeared to them to be deserving of serious consideration—namely, that which proposed to transfer the remains of Dr. Harvey from their present quiet resting-place at Hempstead to Westminster Abbey. But with that suggestion the committee did not concur. They concluded that the most suitable resting-place for Harvey is still among his kindred, so many of whom are in the vault at Hempstead in which his body was deposited two hundred years since. The committee, therefore, recommended that the leaden coffin containing Dr. Harvey's remains should be removed from the Harvey vault under the church, and be deposited in a granite or marble sarcophagus to be erected in the centre of the Harvey Chapel within the said church, and situated immediately over the vault in which it has lain so long. This recommendation of the committee was approved by the College, and the permission of the present representatives of the Harvey family, which was now readily and graciously given, having been obtained, the works were commenced. On the 24th of June, 1883, the President of the College announced to the Fellows that the sarcophagus was completed, and that on the 18th of October, being St. Luke's Day, 1883, the remains of Harvey would be placed within it.

On that day, at about 4 o'clock, P.M., the representatives of the family of Harvey, the President, all the office bearers, and many other Fellows of the College of Physicians, reached Hempstead Church. The President and most, if not all, of the representative persons present, proceeded at once into the vault to view the mortuary chamber of the Harveys,‡ and especially that which had rendered it

* Half of the Church of Hempstead is in ruins. On Saturday, the 28th of January, 1882, shortly after two persons who went to wind up the clock had descended, the whole of the fine and massive tower fell to the ground and bore down with it a half of the nave of the church. Nothing has yet been done to restore the edifice. Huge piles of stones and rubble encumber the churchyard and add to the desolation of the place. The end of the church laid open to the west has been roughly closed by boarding, and through the narrow door in it the coffin of Harvey was borne, not without difficulty, into the church.

† The rift or fissure in the lead, through which the water entered, was limited on both occasions of its occurrence to the lower third of the coffin. It was from 6in. to 8in. in length, and at its widest part, as I learn from Dr. Richardson, would scarcely admit the four fingers of the hand.

‡ Eliab Harvey, the Doctor's younger and favourite brother, when he purchased the Hempstead and Sampford properties, acquired also the advowson of Great Sampford with Hempstead. Having built the vault and chapel at Hempstead, in or before 1655, it became the chief burial-place of his

remarkable, the coffin enclosing the body, or what remains of it, of Dr. William Harvey.* This mummy-shaped chest, or coffin, as described by Drs. Quain and Stewart, still somewhat collapsed in its lower third, had been thoroughly repaired, and this without obtaining any insight into its interior; the water within had been allowed to drain away through a small opening made in the bottom of the coffin, and subsequently closed, and the whole of it had been carefully and judiciously restored. "On his breast in great letters," as Aubrey tells us, was still to be distinctly seen his name:—

DOCTOR.
WILLIAM . HARVEY.
DECEASED . THE . 3.
OF . JUNE . 1657.
AGED . 79 . YEARS.

The President and Officers of the College and the Regius Professors of Physic of Oxford and of Cambridge then withdrew to the vestry, and, having there put on the gowns of their several offices, returned to the steps leading into the vault. The coffin of Harvey having been raised from the vault into the churchyard, placed upon a bier, and covered with a pall, was then borne by eight Fellows of the college—Dr. Owen Rees, Sir Risdon Bennett, Dr. Quain, Dr. Sieveking, Dr. Richardson, Dr. Duckworth, Dr. Shepherd, and Dr. Norman Moore—round the eastern end of the church to the south porch, through it and across the ruined portion of the building into the church itself. It was preceded in procession by the Vicar of Hempstead, the Rev. R. H. Eustace, and his curate, the Rev. J. Escreet, and immediately followed by the representatives of the Harvey family—Col. Lloyd, Col. Harvey Bramstone, Mr. Francis Lloyd, and Mr. Rossendale Lloyd.†

family and so continued down to Sir Eliab Harvey, K.C.B., his last male descendant, and indeed the last heir male of the Harveys. William Harvey, the physician, was the first adult person laid in this vault. His coffin was doubtless then deposited in the very spot in the more distant part of the vault, with the feet towards the east, and immediately under the east window, where it was seen by Drs. Quain and Stewart on the 9th of June, 1859. Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey, who died the 20th February, 1830, was the last person buried there. In the interval some forty-four members of the Harvey family seem to have found their burial-place in this vault. Drs. Quain and Stewart counted forty-six coffins in all—twelve of these of lead, and similar in form and structure to that of Dr. Harvey, were ranged in a row along the east of the chamber, his being in the centre of them. The rest of the coffins in the vault were disposed on the floor more or less irregularly and without apparent order of any kind. Some of these had to be slightly moved to make room for the brick piers which had become necessary for the support of the floor of the Harvey chapel immediately above it and of the sarcophagus placed there.

* From the weight of the coffin, when thoroughly drained from the water it had contained, and from the circumstance that there has been no falling-in of its upper half, we may surely indulge the hope and belief that some considerable remains—of the bones at least—of the great Harvey still exist within it, and that these, secured as they now are in the sarcophagus, will doubtless be preserved to the latest period of their possible duration.

† Dr. William Harvey was childless—but the family of Harvey was continued in the male line

Then came the President of the Royal College of Physicians, in his robes, carrying the silver caduceus, the emblem of his office—Sir William Jenner, Bart., K.C.B., M.D. The college officers in their gowns—George T. Fincham, M.D., Sir Andrew Clark, Bart., M.D., Frederick W. Pavy, M.D., Wilson Fox, M.D., Censors; Frederic J. Farre, M.D., Treasurer; Sir Henry Pitman, M.D., Registrar; William Munk, M.D., Harveian Librarian; William H. Allchin, M.B., Assistant Registrar.

And next in order George E. Paget, M.D., Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge, Henry Wentworth Acland, M.D., Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, each in the red gown of his respective university, and the following Fellows of the College of Physicians:—Henry Monro, M.D., Charles B. Radcliffe, M.D., William Wood, M.D., William M. Graily Hewitt, M.D., Alfred Meadows, M.D., Richard Douglas Powell, M.D., William G. Hunter, M.D.

The bier having been placed close to the sarcophagus, portions of the Evening Service of the Church of England were read from the desk by the Rev. John Escreet, and of these as singularly appropriate to the occasion may be noted, the lesson appointed to be read on the evening of the day, the festival of St. Luke, and beginning, "Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 1-15).

The coffin was then carefully and reverently deposited in the sarcophagus, and the last of the prayers in the Burial Service having been read at the head of the sarcophagus by the vicar of the parish, the religious portion of the ceremony was ended.

Finally, the President of the College placed in the sarcophagus, and on the lower part of the coffin, a bound copy, encased in lead, of the handsome edition in quarto of Harvey's works, published by the College in 1766, *Gulielmi Harveii Opera Omnia a Collegio Medicorum Londinensi Editi*, and close to it a smaller leaden case, enclosing a glass bottle, hermetically sealed, within which was a parchment scroll on which was engrossed the following account of the proceedings of the day:—

"The body of William Harvey, 'lapt' in lead simply soldered, was laid, without shell or enclosure of any kind, in the Harvey vault of this church of Hempstead, Essex, in June, 1657.

"In the course of time, the lead enclosing the remains was, from exposure and natural decay, so

for some two centuries by the descendants of his brothers Daniel and Eliab. The former and elder branch, that from Daniel Harvey, terminated in the person of Michael Harvey, of Coombe Neville, who died 3rd October, 1748; whilst the latter, that from Eliab Harvey, ceased in the *male* line in the person of Sir Eliab Harvey, K.C.B. and Admiral of the Red, who died 20th February, 1830. But Sir Eliab Harvey left six daughters and co-heiresses. The eldest of these daughters, Louisa, became the wife of William Lloyd, Esq., of Aston, Salop, and their eldest surviving son, Colonel Richard Thomas Lloyd, of Aston Hall, and the owner of Rolis Park, Essex—the earliest possession of the Harveys in that county—now the direct representative of the Harveys, as such attended the ceremony at Hempstead, together with *his* eldest son—Francis Lloyd, Esq., of the Grenadier Guards—and his third son, Rosendale Lloyd, Esq., an under-graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge. Eliza, the fifth daughter of Sir Eliab Harvey, was married to Thomas William Bramston, Esq., of Skreens, Co. Essex, and their eldest son, Colonel Thomas Harvey Bramston, now of Skreens, was the fourth representative of the Harveys present at the ceremony.

* Exact duplicates of this scroll have been prepared—one of them to be preserved among the archives of the College of Physicians—the other to be deposited at the British Museum.

seriously damaged as to endanger its preservation and render some repair of it the duty of those interested in the memory of the illustrious discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

"The Royal College of Physicians of London, of which corporate body Harvey was a munificent benefactor, and which, by his favour, is the possessor in perpetuity of his patrimonial estate at Burmarsh, Kent, did, in the years 1882 and '83, by the permission of the Harvey family, undertake that duty.

"In accordance with this determination the leaden mortuary chest containing the remains of Harvey was repaired, and, as far as possible, restored to its original state, and on this 18th of October, 1883, in the presence of four representatives of the Harvey family and of the president, all the office bearers, and many other fellows of the College of Physicians (whose names are hereunto appended), was reverently translated from the Harvey vault to this sarcophagus, raised by the College for its reception and preservation."*

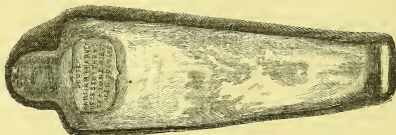
The heavy monolith cover was then rolled on to the sarcophagus, and, having been securely fixed there, the proceedings terminated.

The sarcophagus, of white Sicilian marble, is massive and plain. It is placed due north and south in the centre of the Harvey chapel. At its end towards the south is cut "William Harvey. Born 1578. Died 1657"; and on its side looking to the west, "The Remains of William Harvey, Discoverer of the Circulation of the Blood, were reverentially placed in this sarcophagus by the Royal College of Physicians of London in the year 1883."

WILLIAM MUNK, M.D., F.S.A.,

*Fellow and Harveian Librarian of the
Royal College of Physicians.*

* Appended to this are the names of all the representatives of the Harvey family, and of the members of the College of Physicians present and taking part in the ceremony.



ENGRAVED FROM A DRAWING BY T. ALLCHIN, ESQ.







